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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the increasing participation of women in the teaching profession in Singapore, and relates this phenomenon to that country's rapid economic development, changing social role of women, and government policy. First, data is presented which reveals that, over the last twenty years, women teachers have come to outnumber men. However, women's prominence varies by educational level and occupational attainment: the vast majority of women teachers work at the primary level, and relatively few have attained senior or administrative positions. Second, this pattern of employment is discussed in relation to changes in the structure of schooling over the last century, including the expansion of educational opportunities, increasing government control, and the growth of co-education. Next, the paper describes teacher and recruitment policies, including problems experienced by the government in attracting men into teaching. Finally, recent government attempts to improve the status of the teaching profession are described. (KH)

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THE FEMINIZATION OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION IN SINGAPORE

BY

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THE FEMINIZATION OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION IN SINGAPORE

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Singapore has been widely regarded as one of the success stories in economic development because of the way in the last twenty years it has developed a highly urbanized and modernized economy from a limited set of physical resources. Associated with this economic development there have been changes in the nature of women's participation in the economy. These changes have been outlined in a number of studies which have considered women's economic participation (Fong, 1975; A. Wong, 1976a; Chang, 1977; Chiew, 1977). There have also been studies of women's participation in specific sectors of the economy such as manufacturing (Heyzer, 1979 & 'forthcoming'; Deyo, 1976). The present paper examines the changes which have occurred in women's participation in the teaching profession and the way these are related to developments in other areas of the economy and society.

Teaching is a particularly interesting occupation to examine in Singapore for a number of reasons. Since employment as a teacher requires a relatively high level of demonstrated competence in skills taught in formal schooling, the participation in teaching of a social group such as women indicates that they do have some access to the higher levels of education. In Singapore, as in other industrializing nations, the professional occupations are ones which attract the rewards of higher social status such as prestige and income. The largest occupational grouping classified as professionals in Singapore in 1970 were primary and secondary teachers. Participation in teaching is therefore a potentially important indicator of high social status. In most industrialized nations there is

ample documentation of women's numerical domination of the teaching profession (Boulding, 1977:24-8; Byrne, 1978:212ff). Yet, associated with this domination is the connotation of teaching being 'women's work' and a tendency for teachers to receive lower pay and status compared with those in other occupations with similar entry requirements. Whether similar patterns exist in Singapore is therefore clearly relevant to discussions concerning the nature and direction of social and economic change. A major feature of Singapore's changing society has been the government's desire for planned change in social and economic areas. Education has been regarded by the government as playing an important direct, and indirect, role in bringing about the desired changes. As a result there has been an extension of direct government control over all areas of education including the training, recruitment and career provisions for teachers. Because of this extensive control an examination of the government's policies relating to teachers highlights certain more general governmental ideas about the role of women in Singapore society.

WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN TEACHING

The characteristics of women's participation in teaching in Singapore are illustrated in Table 1 which shows how, at a time of absolute increase in the number of teachers, women have become increasingly important in the teaching profession. By 1970 women teachers outnumbered men. Women's prominence however varies with the level at which they teach, for women are less likely to be employed at the secondary and tertiary levels than they are at the primary level. Figures for 1978 (Singapore 1979d:220) indicate, for example, that whereas 64 per cent of primary school teachers are women, only 51 per cent of the secondary teachers are and, for the tertiary level institutions, the proportion is only 17 percent.

The differential participation of women in teaching relates not only to the level at which they teach but, also, to their occupation of more senior positions within the teaching profession. Data from the 1970 census shows that only 26 per cent of teachers who were classified as school inspectors or principals were women and information contained in the official 1980 listing of schools in Singapore indicates that the situation has changed little since then as still only 26 per cent of the 463 primary and secondary school principals in 1980 were women and, among the vice-principals, only 31 per cent were women (Singapore, 1980). Another indication that women are employed in less senior positions than men is provided by a comparison of male and female wages, for Singapore teachers receive equal pay for equal work, regardless of sex. In 1978 the average monthly basic wage of male teachers was some 5 per cent higher than that of their female colleagues at both the primary and secondary levels (Singapore, 1978:47).

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Table 1. Women's Participation in Teaching

	Total Teachers excluding University & Higher Education	% Women	Total All 'teachers'	% Women
1921	-	-	984	30
1931	-	-	1890	32
1947	-	-	3142	45
1957	9522	47	9675	47
1970	21980	56	23167	55
1978	-	-	20608	58

Sources: Nathan, 1922; Vlieland, 1932; del Tufo, 1949; Chua, 1964; Arumainathan, 1973; Singapore, 1979a.

The increasing involvement of women in teaching has coincided with a general increase in women's participation in the labour force and in their level of literacy, as Tables 2 and 3 show.[1] However, the increasing prominence of women in teaching cannot be explained simply be reference to their higher levels of literacy and of participation in the labour force, for, as Table 4 indicates, women have for long been somewhat overrpresented in teaching and the professions in comparison with their general representation in the labour force. Since 1957 the occupations which have shown most rapid expansion in Singapore have been those classified as professional ones (Neville, 1979:150; Singapore, 1979a:21). However, women's relative prominence in the professions has actually declined since 1970, which indicates that they have been less successful than men in establishing themselves in the new professional occupations, which have included architects, engineers, surveyors and related technicians. Teaching is an exception to the general expansion of professional occupations and it is significant to understanding the nature of women's participation in teaching that women's increased prominence has coincided with the contraction of teaching jobs and women's failure to maintain their level of representation in the professions.

Table 2. Women's Participation in the Labour Force

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	% of Women over 10 in labour force	% of Women over 15 in labour force
1921[1]	23.0	19.0[4]
1931[2]	13.0	12.8[4]
1947[3]	16.0	18.1[4]
1957[4]	19.3	20.4[4]
1970[5]	24.6	29.5[6]
1978[6]	-	40.1

Sources: 1. Nathan, 1922; 2. Vlieland, 1932; 3. del Tufo, 1949; 4. Chua, 1964; 5. Arumainathan, 1973; 6. Singapore, 1979a.

Table 3. Literacy Rates for Women

	% of Women Literate in Any Language
1921[1]	13
1931	14
1947	20
1957[2]	34
1970[2]	60
1978[2]	77

Notes: 1. Figures only apply to the town of Singapore

2. Figures are for the population 10 years of age and over.

Sources: Nathan, 1922;Vlieland, 1932; del Tufo, 1949; Chua, 1964; Arumainathan, 1973; Singapore, 1979d

Table 4. Women's involvement in Various Occupations

	1921	1931	1947	1957	1970	1978
% of teachers who are women	30	32	45	47	55	58
% of professionals who are women	18	22	33	37	39	36
% of labour force who are women	7	7	13	18	24	33

Sources: Nathan, 22; Vlieland, 1932;del Tufo, 1949; Chua, 1964; Arumainathan, 1973; Singapore, 1979a.

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A fuller understanding of the changes which have resulted in the present patterns of women's participation in teaching and the reason why their numerical dominance is not equally reflected at the primary and the secondary levels of education and in positions of authority requires an examination of the institutional changes which have taken place in Singapore education and society since the beginning of the century. These changes have occurred in a society whose population consists predominantly of the descendents of immigrants who came to Singapore in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These immigrants came from a variety of different cultural backgrounds of which the major ones were Chinese, Indian, and Malay. In 1978 the largest group in the population were Chinese (76 per cent), while Malays were 15 per cent and Indians were 7 per cent. These proporitions of the three groups in the population had actually changed very little since 1901. Associated with these ethnic divisions in the population there have, historically, been separate educational and economic institutions which are important in arriving at an understanding of the participation of various social groups in the labour force, as rather different employment markets related to language and ethnicity have existed in Singapore (Pang, 1976:327-8). Three main areas of change which directly relate to the nature of the teaching profession will be examined in the next part of the paper. These areas are the structure of schooling, the provisions for teacher training and,

finally, the recruitment policies which directly, and indirectly, affect teacher recruitment.

THE STRUCTURES OF SCHOOLING

The significance of the structures of schooling provisions is twofold. First, they relate directly to the numbers of teachers needed and to the type of personal and educational qualifications that are sought in prospective teachers. Secondly, the structures of schooling are important for the way in which access to education and educational achievement may not be equally distributed throughout the population. As a result, certain groups may be less likely to have the skills and qualifications necessary for entering teaching. The major changes which have occurred in Singapore schools during the last century include the expansion of the schooling system to provide more children with education, and to a higher level; the extension of government control over the operation of schools which has had as one of its consequences the effective decline of the non-English language schools; and a shift towards co-educational education (Doraisamy, 1969; Wong and G wee, 1972; Gopinathan, 1974; Loh, 1975; Wilson 1978). These changes have come about in a society where the earliest provisions for education were mainly the result of individual initiative by private individuals and Christian religious groups. Government intervention was restricted to providing limited financial assistance to selected schools and a small number of schools for the Malay population. The ad hoc approach by the various groups resulted in schools which used a variety of the local languages or English as the medium of instruction, while their curriculums were even more diverse. By the 1900s only a very small number of pupils, mainly boys, were attending the existing schools.

There was, however, a gradual expansion of educational opportunities up until the Japanese occupation of Singapore in 1942. The expansion resulted in part from the increasing numbers of children in the population. There were also certain incentives for obtaining English education, as it was the major avenue for obtaining jobs with the administration or in European commercial firms. In keeping with this vocational orientation the government both provided its own English medium schools and gave financial assistance to private ones. In terms of enrolments in this period the Chinese medium schools included more pupils than the English ones.[2] Many of these Chinese schools had been founded by private individuals and groups in response to the belief that education was an important means of achieving the political, social and economic changes they considered desirable in China. This orientation made the Chinese medium schools a matter of concern to the government whose strategy became one of controlling rather than encouraging them (Inglis, 1980). In comparison with the English and Chinese medium schools there was less popular demand for either Tamil or Malay medium education and, unlike the English and Chinese medium schools, none of those which did exist taught at the secondary level. Except for Malay boys who lived close to the school, schooling was not compulsory in Singapore and the other Straits Settlements of Penang and Malacca. With the variations in provisions and support for education between groups, wide differences existed in the access to schooling of children from the various ethnic groups, as the figures in Table 5 indicate. Although these figures are for all the Straits Settlements and not merely for Singapore, the trends indicated would seem to have been applicable to Singapore. Girls were less likely to attend school than were boys, regardless of ethnic group. The disparities were greatest for the Chinese and the Malays and the latter, regardless of sex, were also far less likely to be attending English medium schools. Especially in the English and Malay medium schools there were coeducational classes,

Schooling was extensively disrupted during the Japanese occupation of Singapore (Akashi, 1976), and after it ended there was a great demand for school places which proved difficult to accommodate, given the lack of buildings and other physical resources and the lack of teachers. Following the end of the Second World War, the future of the colony of Singapore became an important political issue. After the reestablishment of the British civil administration in 1946, Singapore was administered separately from the other Straits Settlements, which were incorporated with the Federated and Unfederated Malay States. It was envisaged that Singapore would soon gain independence, but a major issue for the administration to resolve was how this could be achieved in a manner which would avoid communal conflict and promote national unity. Education was seen as playing a major role in achieving these goals and the way in which this was to be done was outlined in the 1947 10 Year Programme and the 1949 Five Year Supplementary Plan. The policy, while allowing government support for primary vernacular schools, in fact had as its underlying rationale the use of English language education as the unifying force in Singaporean society. The explanation for this strategy lay largely in the long-standing fear by the authorities of the dangers posed by the Chinese medium schools which, as Table 6 shows, had greatly expanded after 1945 by comparison with the English schools, and which were seen as indoctrinating their students with pro-Chinese and anti-British sentiments. In the post-war period these fears were compounded by the establishment of the communist government in China and the outbreak of communist insurgency in Malaya. Although there were continuing modifications to the educational policy to cope with objections which came not only from the Chinese but also the

Tamil and Malay medium schools, the conflicts did not end. Indeed, in the period preceding independence in 1959, there were sometimes violent and bloody riots and strikes involving the Chinese medium schools and their students. In 1956, following the Report of the All-Party Committee, major changes began to be made in the educational system. The reorganization had as its most significant result the provision of greater support and acceptance of the non-English medium schools. This was done by means of extending financial support to those private schools willing to receive governmental funding in return for government control, and, also by direct government involvement in other areas, such as providing new schools and teacher training. As part of these changes government control over all aspects of schooling, including the teaching force, was extended.

Table 6. Enrolments in Singapore Schools by Language Stream

		Language Stream			
Year	Total	English	Chinese	Malay	Indian/Tamil
1941[1]	71,800	27,000	38,000	5,800	1,000
1949[1]	115,544	38,302	68,065	7,862	1,315
1957[2]	259,997	127,853	117,374	13,419	1,351
1968[3]	384,392	232,376	122,368	27,980	1,668
1972[3]	365,606	236,072	115,991	12,527	1,016
1978[3]	311,510	249,676	60,123	1,581	130

Source: 1. Mason, 1959 : 15

2. Singapore, 1959: 37

3. Singapore, 1979d

A major concern of the government of independent Singapore has been to establish the viability of the economy and, given the limited physical resources, the emphasis has been placed on developing the country's human resources. The way to achieve this has been seen as developing a workforce with the training and skills necessary to provide the technical and tertiary services-whether in finance, manufacturing, medicine or education-suitable to Singapore's role as a service and manufacturing centre for the Southeast Asian region. An important element in achieving this goal has been the raising of the educational level of the population and, as the figures on school enrolments in Table 6 illustrate, the government has been extremely successful in this regard. The increase enrolments represent a larger proportion of the population receiving education than was the case in 1936 (Table 5), for in 1978 84 per cent of those aged between 5 and 11 were in primary school and 53% of those aged between 12 and 17 were attending secondary school. In the expansion of education girls have achieved far greater access than was previously the case. Indeed, as the figures in Table 7 illustrate, by 1978 females were a larger proportion of enrolments at the secondary level in all except the Chinese language streams schools. The level of the government's success is considerable when it is realised that education is not compulsory in Singapore beyond the primary level. An important element in the government's success has been its use of economic inducements to encourage the raising of educational standards. In addition to using these inducements to raise the level of education the government has also been extremely successful in using them to achieve the shift of students into the English medium schools. Whereas in 1957 49 per cent of all students were in English medium schools, by 1978 the figure had increased to 80 per cent. Since then, the trend has been continued with the Tamil and Malay language streams now either closed or about to be closed because of the falling enrolments (see Table 6).

One factor, in addition to the better job prospects, which has encouraged the shift of pupils to English medium schools has been the government policy on bilingualism. Although this has taken many forms,[3] it has involved the pupil not only learning two languages but, also, being taught in two languages. One of the languages is English and the second has been the pupils' own choice from Chinese, Malay or Tamil. As a result of this policy, parents could send their children to English medium schools in the knowledge that they would also acquire a second language. This emphasis on students studying a second language was given even greater importance by the 1979 decision that they would need to pass the General Certificate of Education "O" Level exam at the end of the lower secondary course in English and another language if they wished to continue with their education (Singapore, 1979b:2-2). (See Table 7)

Over the last century the expansion of pupil numbers, which continued until the last decade when the effects of the government's family planning policy became evident in new school enrolments, has created an increased need for teachers. Even though fewer children are now entering primary school, they are continuing further with their education and this has increased the need for teachers trained to teach junior and senior levels of secondary school. In catering for the increased numbers of pupils, and especially those seeking education in the English language stream, the government has been involved in building many new schools, all of which have been coeducational. Now the majority of Singapore schools are coeducational and even in those schools which are not coeducational both male and female teachers are employed. With only 1 percent of all primary and secondary schools not either 'government' or 'government-aided' the majority of Singapore teachers are now effectively government employees.

Table 7. Percentage of Female Enrolments in Various Language Streams

Schools	1978[1] %	1972[1] %	1968[1] %	1957[2] %	1936[3] %
Primary Level					
English	47.2	46.9	46.0	42.0	30.7
Chinese	46.8	45.7	44.7	40.5	26.4
Malay	54.4	60.5	59.2	46.1	25.6
Tamil	53.6	59.9	66.4	61.3	36.5
Total	47.1	47.0	46.6	41.7	27.7
Secondary					
English	52.2	50.4	47.0	34.1	
Chinese	48.9	45.0	42.6	36.0	
Malay	70.2	64.5	58.0	-	
Tamil	66.7	66.8	72.9	-	
Total	51.6	49.6	46.1	36.0	

Note: The figures for 1936 are for the Straits Settlement which included Penang and Malacca as well as Singapore. The figures are not available separately by level, but the numbers enrolled at secondary level in the Chinese and English medium schools would have been small by comparison e.g. of Chinese medium school enrolments only about 4% of the boys and 6% of the girls were of secondary school age (Jackson, 1939: 106).

Sources: 1. Singapore, 1979d. Singapore, 1959.

2. Singapore, 1959: 48-49.

3. Manderson, 1978: 117 & 119.

Even although those working in the government-aided schools are employed by the school board of management, the government is responsible for certifying all teachers and, also, controls the numbers and types of all teachers employed in these and the government schools. The massive decline in enrolments in non-English medium schools has created an enormous staffing problem because of the oversupply of teachers equipped to teach in Malay, Chinese and Tamil and the undersupply of teachers equipped to teach in English. The solution adopted has been the retraining of teachers to teach in English and the training of new teachers for the English language stream. Now, with the recent decision to require all students to pass the G.C.E. 'O' Level exam in two languages a new need has been created for Chinese, Malay and Tamil language teachers.

TEACHER TRAINING PROVISIONS

The provisions, or lack of them, for teacher training in Singapore have varied extensively both over time and for the different linguistic streams. Furthermore, the nature and quality of the training provided has been very much a result of the exigencies of the need for extra teachers. Local training of teachers is only one way of meeting this need since immigrant teachers may be used together with those who lack specific teacher training qualifications. Indeed, as late as 1958, half of the registered teachers in Singapore schools lacked recognized teacher training qualifications (Singapore, 1959:40-1). In the early days in Singapore the teachers in the local schools were virtually all educated overseas and had migrated to Singapore. The exceptions, who had been educated in the colony however, had only received a general education without specific teacher teaching.

In the pre-war period, government sponsored teacher training courses were mainly provided in the Malay and English language streams where the government had the highest level of commitment. The first actual course provisions for teacher training were made for Malay teachers in 1978 (Wong and Gwee, 1972:12). This course ceased in 1895 but in 1901 a training college was opened at Malacca. In 1922 the Sultan Idris Training College for male Malay teachers was opened in Perak and later on a similar college for women was opened in Malacca. These colleges could only train a small number of students each year yet they were the major means for training all the Malay teachers for British Malaya.

Initially, in the English medium schools, provisions were made for pupil-teacher schools which were later on replaced by a series of Normal courses. The graduates of these courses were prepared primarily for primary teaching. Unlike the Malay schools, the English medium schools also offered secondary classes which meant a need existed for more highly trained teachers. Until 1928 when Raffles College was set up in Singapore to prepare secondary school teachers, a small number of students were sent each year to the University of Hong Kong where they were trained as secondary school teachers.

By comparison with the training of Malay and English medium teachers governmental provisions for Chinese, and particularly Tamil, teachers were limited. During the 1930s the government provided a limited number of teacher training courses. The major provisions for training teachers locally were made by the individual Chinese high schools which set up Normal classes. The first such classes was set up in 1918 in a girls school and this system continued until 1941 (Kan, 1964:172). Whereas Chinese women were trained locally it was more usual for Chinese men to be sent to China for their teacher training. As in the English schools, immigrant teachers played a major role in Chinese schools. In 1941 for a brief period before the Japanese occupation, a privately sponsored Chinese teacher training college enrolled a substantial number

The Tamil medium schools have been described as the poor relations of the education system in Singapore and British Malaya and this is as true of the provision made for Tamil teacher training as it is for other areas of their operation. The schools, which were only at primary level, were set up mainly in rural areas under the requirements of the 1923 Labour code and the 'teacher' was usually a literate member of the local community who taught what he could to the children. The only regular pre-war provision for teacher training was made in 1937 when the government set up a number of part-time courses for those alreadyworking as teachers (Arasaratnan 1970:181-2).

In the immediate post-war period, the urgent need for teachers was met by a series of ad hoc arrangements which included the provision of Normal courses by the government and the Chinese high schools and a variety of part-time courses. The inability of these courses to cope with the need for trained teachers was indicated by the way in 1958 half of the Singapore teachers still lacked recognised teacher training qualifications. In 1950 the government set up the Teachers' Training College to provide regular teacher training courses. Initially, the College only offered courses in English but in 1954 it offered its first Chinese teacher training course which was followed by a Malay course in 1957 and courses in English and Tamil and then entirely in Tamil from 1962. These Tamil courses replaced a Tamil course set up by the government in 1947 (Gopinathan, 1974:15).

For a number of years during the post war period the training of graduate secondary school teachers was undertaken mainly by the University of Malaya which was set up in Singapore in 1950. Except for a brief period it offered courses only to teachers for the English medium schools (Wong and Gwee, 1972:65). Nanyang University also very briefly ran graduate teacher training courses for its own Chinese medium students. From 1960 the Teachers' Training College provided a one year course for university graduates in both Chinese and English. In 1969 the University of Malaya and the College combined in offering such courses and, when the TTC became the Institute of Education in 1973 and the University of Malaya's Department was closed, the Institute took over responsibility for all teacher training in Singapore.

Since independence, part of the government's economic strategy has been an emphasis on manpower planning which has had widespread effects on education (Skolnik, 1976:35). In the case of teacher-training the effect has been to limit the intake of students to teacher training courses to those which the system can expect to employ immediately. The numbers to be trained for any one course are advised to the Institute of Education which then selects the appropriate number of trainees from the applicants. With the massive increase in English language pupils the major focus of the Institute's activity in pre-service courses in recent years has been the training of English medium teachers. In July 1980, however, it again recruited Chinese graduate students in an effort to meet the needs for extra teachers which had resulted from the recent changes in the operation of bilingualism in the schools. Because of the variations in course offerings, only English stream students have been able to anticipate that a teacher training course will be provided each semester. Students from other language backgrounds have, in recent years, had no such certainty about the possibility of training as a teacher.

While the Institute has operated within very rigid guidelines in selecting the numbers of students for training in the various language streams, it has generally been less constrained in its selection of students according to their sex. As an examination of the figures on teacher trainees in Table 8 shows, women have, since 1963, consistently outnumbered men in the teacher-training courses and particularly those preparing students for primary school teaching. In the courses designed for university graduates, women only began to outnumber men from the 1970s. However, within this group of students there were marked differences between those training to be English stream teachers from the University of Singapore, as it had been renamed, and those from Nanyang University training for work in the Chinese language stream. Among the latter group of students, men markedly outnumbered women whereas among the English stream students, the numbers were more nearly equal. The proponderance of women among graduate students from the 1970s is in part related to the limited numbers of Chinese stream students than being trained. Given these figures on student enrolments one begins to wonder why women have not established a greater numerical presence in the teaching profession. The increasing preponderance of women joining the courses can be linked to their increasing preponderance at the higher levels of secondary school. However, it is clear that this is not wholly the explanation. An important contributing factor lies in the recruitment policies for teaching positions and the way these policies are a response to choices being made in the labour market by potential recruits to teaching.

RECRUITMENT POLICIES

The third major factor which directly affects the characteristics of the teaching profession is the recruitment policies of the employing bodies. Recruitment policy is here used in a broad sense to refer not only to whom is selected but, also, to the level of remuneration and other conditions of employment such as fringe benefits and career prospects. Inevitably, recruitment policy for a particular occupation is related to the whole labour market structure and the relative attractiveness of, and the opportunities which exist for, entering other occupations. An important characteristic of the Singapore economy which has already been mentioned is the existence of alternative, linguistically based, labour markets with rather different characteristics. Although with modernization and economic development the distinctiveness of these markets is declining, nevertheless they do still retain an importance for examining recruitment into teaching.

In the colonial period information on the policies of the diverse bodies recruiting and employing teachers in Singapore is difficult to establish. However, one important feature of their policies was that in single sex schools staff of the same sex as the pupils were preferred. The effect of this preference was that, from the earliest stages of women's education, openings existed for women teachers. Initially, the openings for women in English-medium schools were filled by European and Eurasian women women who in the earlier period had

Table 8. New Enrolments in Pre-Service Teacher Training Courses for Selected Years

	Non-Graduate Courses			Graduate Courses			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
1979[1]	186	1348	1534	121	498	619	307	1846	2153
1978[1]	111	821	932	128	504	642	239	1325	1574
1977[1]	126	710	836	118	497	615	244	1207	1451
1976[1]	76	344	420	71	292	363	147	636	783
1975[1]	24	113	137	37	185	222	61	298	459
1974[1]	19	116	135	14	78	92	33	194	227
1967[2]	551	883	1434	123	95	218	674	978	1652
1966[2]	578	842	1420	147	81	228	725	923	1648
1965[2]	629	1162	1991	149	91	240	978	1253	2231
1964[2]	621	848	1469	59	52	111	680	900	1580
1963[2]	894	1248	2142	121	47	168	1015	1295	2310
1962[2]	819	601	1420	102	57	159	921	658	1579
1961[2]	492	305	877	106	58	164	598	443	1041
1960[2]	375	386	761	82	47	129	457	433	890
1958[2]	1315	1172	2487	-	-	-	1315	1172	2487

Note: Figures for 1976-1979 refer to total enrolments during the year and so include students who are new enrolments together with those previously enrolled.

Source: 1. Institute of Education, 1973/74 - 1978/79.

2. Singapore, 1958 1960-1967.

far greater access to educational opportunities than women from the other groups. However, their relative importance declined as education spread more widely among other groups in society. Another feature of employment policies was that in the vernacular schools teachers educated in the same language as the school's medium of instruction were sought and this inevitably favoured teachers of the same racial background.The major except to this was perhaps those teachers employed to teach English in the vernacular schools. For these various reasons it is not surprising to find that Chinese women have been most prominent among the women teachers since not only were they the largest racial group in the population but the Chinese schools were also the most numerous. The relative overrepresentation of Indian women teachers compared to their general role in the labour force is partly related to the way women from certain sections of the Indian community had relatively high levels of access to education and, especially, English language education(see Table 5 above).

As might be anticipated, the conditions of service varied considerably from one employer to another though it was standard practice for men to be paid more than women and for 'Europeans' to be paid more than 'Asians'. Malay medium teachers and those English medium teachers employed by the government had the greatest security and, probably, pay. Teachers in the Chinese schools were employed on half-yearly or other short term contracts and their security of tenure was very limited. Finance was frequently a problem for the Chinese schools and this also affected the teachers' conditions of employment. Of all the teachers, those in the Tamil medium schools had the least satisfactory conditions and few were even employed on a full-time basis(Arasaratnam. 1974: 180-1).

Towards the end of the colonial period the government increasingly acquired control of theschools and became the sole body formulating policy on recruitment. In examining its policy it is necessary to also consider how the government organised teacher-training courses since with its emphasis on manpower planning the intention was that all students who were admitted to courses, and passed them, were assured of employment as teachers. This policy applied as much to student teachers who opted for employment in the government-aided schools as it did to those who sought employment in the government schools. The former students were in theory appointed by the individual school whereas the latter were allocated by the Ministry of Education. However, with the changing enrolment patterns affecting the viability of many vernacular schools and the changes in the medium of instruction to involve greater use of English, teachers were frequently moved between government and government aided schools. As as result of the organisational changes which had taken place, by 1980 most teachers percieved little difference in the conditions of service, career and retirement prospects of either set of teachers regardless of language stream or sex for, since 1962, equal pay had existed in the civil service(Cheng 1977:373). This was a great advance on the situation of 30 years previously for one of the major difficu lties facing the government in its attempt to establish control over the non-government schools was the incorporation of teachers from these schools into the system since many of them either had no qualifications or ones not recognized by the government. Hence they were extremely concerned about their career propsects.

In 1979 a major inquiry was held into Singapore's education system. A major conclusion of the inquiry was that the language strategy underlying the education system has been unsuccessful (Singapore, 1979b). The significance of the report lay in the way it

stressed the critical need to remedy the faults it saw in education. The resulting attention devoted to remedying the defects in education indicated the crucial role which it was seen to play in social and economic development. One area which the report addressed itself to was the status and allegedly low morale of teachers. One cause of the difficulties in this area was seen in the report to be the relatively poor promotion prospects for non-graduate and, to a lesser extent, graduate teachers by comparison with their peers in other areas of the civil service. Another area concerned the standard of teacher qualifications. While the report made certain recommendations about providing teachers with opportunities to improve their qualifications, many of the major changes in policy were announced separately. Thus, in 1979, there was a major review of the salary and promotion structures for teachers which was designed tp make the job more attractive. Another move in this direction was the announcement in 1980 that payments to trainee teachers would be increased, especially for those with graduate qualifications. At the same time, the training course became a full-time instead of mainly part-time course. The clear aim of these changes was to improve the status of teaching and so attract into teaching a better quality person.

No mention was made in the report of the role of women in teaching yet this was an issue which had concerned the government for some time. At one stage in the course of economic development women were exhorted to take over various economic tasks such as teaching so as to leave men free to undertake more important tasks. As we have seen, women had little hesitation in moving into teaching, while many men left it to seek the better job prospects they saw elsewhere in the economy. The relative absence of men from teaching soon began to cause concern to the administrators. One reason given for this concern

was that women were less ambitious and so less willing to apply for promotions to more senior positions.[4] As a result, there were some fears about the future supply of school principles and administrators. Another reason was that boys should have male authority figures to look up to in the school(Straits Times, 13.3.78).

In an attempt to overcome the shortage of men it was decided to ease the entry requirements for men entering non-graduate teacher-training courses. This was done by waiving the requirement that the qualifications necessary for entry were all to be obtained at the one exam(Straits Times, 3.3.1979). The relaxation and certain salary inducements however had little effect on the numbers of men applying to enter the teacher training courses.

The lack of government success in currently attracting men into teaching indicates that the social and economic situation of teachers today is somewhat different from earlier periods. Traditionally, in the cultures from which Singapore's population came, teachers were, as men of learning, accorded considerable respect. In the early years of settlement this respect still existed for teachers who were one of the few professional groups in the society. Teaching, in this situation, was an attractive occupation to men while, for the limited number of educated women, it was one of the few 'acceptable' occupations even though the conditions of service were often variable.

In the post-war period independence and the economic expansion have created many new job opportunities in both the public and private sector. These opportunities have, in practice, been more readily available to men, especially those with an English language education (Clark & Pang, 1970; Pang, forthcoming). A survey of students at the

Chinese language, Nanyang University in the early 1970s demonstrated that they felt they were disadvantaged in obtaining jobs by comparison with graduates from the University of Singapore(Lind, 1974:169). The material already considered on the predominance of women graduates and, earlier, male Chinese-language graduates in the teacher-training courses, would fit in with an interpretation that these groups entered teaching because of lack of opportunities in other areas. A somewhat similar conclusion was reached in an extensive survey of trainee teachers in 1965(Teachers' Training College, Singapore, 1967:42). In the case of the women, lack of alternatives may be supplemented by a rather more positive attaction to teaching because of the way it is seen as either fitting in with feminine traits such as an interest in children or giving the women an opportunity to combine their work and family roles as mothers and wives.

For some time now, girls in Singapore have been more highly represented in secondary school than boys, yet a much smaller proportion of these women go on to tertiary level, and especially to the universities. Among those who do not proceed to university are a number who enter primary or lower secondary level teaching. For this group, the relative economic and social attractions of teaching may be somewhat greater than for those who obtain a university degree. Thus in the other large white-collar or semi-professional occupations for which average monthly salaries are given in the Yearbook of Labour Statistics(Singapore, 1979d) the salary of female primary teachers is far higher. For many years there has been extensive debate in Singapore about the low social status of teachers(Phua, 1971) which many commentators link to a lack of professionalism(Lee, 1971). This lack of professionalism often refers to the performance of the considerable range of tasks which teachers are expected to undertake and which vary from supervision

of teeth-cleaning to ensuring the preservation of the moral fibre of the nation's youth. Nevertheless, teaching as an occupation still also retains not only economic attractions but has somewhat more prestige than many other alternative jobs. Another major attraction in teaching is the hours of work for, with two sessions operating in most schools, teachers usually teach for only half a day. In addition, teachers are usually also able to have the school holidays free of teaching commitments.

None of the attractions of teaching mentioned so far are unique to women. In Singapore, though, teaching has typically been seen as a job well suited to allowing a working woman to fulfill her role as a wife and, later, a mother. The extensive acceptance of the latter role has been described as characterizing Singaporean society (A. Wong, 1975:78-90; 1976a:306-7; 1976b: 214-5). However, their importance is more relevant to discussions, not of entry into teaching, for few women are married when they start their training, but of continuation after marriage and motherhood. A comparison of the proportion of married women teachers with married women in the workforce generally does indicate that an above average proportion of teachers were married. The figure was 50 per cent in 1970 compared with 31 per cent among the whole female workforce and, by 1978, the comparable figures were 58 per cent and 36 per cent. While noting these figures it is at the same time interesting to compare the figures for men and women teachers. These show that a larger proportion of men than women teachers are married. This observation suggests that women are less likely to find it desirable, or possible, to continue to teach after marriage. The reasons typically given for why teaching is an appropriate occupation for a married woman relate to the longer holiday periods and the shorter hours of work which allow a woman to fulfil her domestic roles. The ready

availability of domestic servants previously made such considerations less important for a woman who could afford to employ them(F.Wong, 1964:419) but in recent years their availability has lessened and child care centres are also fairly limited in number(A.Wong, 1976b:214). It is in organizational features such as this as much as in the perception of links between child-care and teaching, that teaching has been viewed in Singapore as appropriate 'women's work'.

In the 1970s, the significance of teaching as an occupation for women had changed considerably from the pre-war period. At that time when a woman working outside the home was unusual, especially for women from higher socio-economic status families who were the ones best placed to provide daughters with an education, teaching was almost the only acceptable occupation for a woman from such a background. This point was illustrated on her retirement by the Chinese principal of a prominent girls school who noted in her reminiscences how, in 1939 when she started teaching, it was the only alternative her family allowed her apart from getting married or continuing to remain unemployed(Straits Times, 16.2.78). As she described,the acceptability at that time of teaching lay in the way it was possible to work as a teacher in the relative seclusion of an all female environment. Such an explanation for the acceptability of teaching applied as much to the Malay and Indian women as it did to the Chinese. Even given the limitations implicit in such an acceptance of teaching, the women who chose to enter teaching at that time can be viewed as pioneers who were extending the range of roles available to women. In some cases, as with many of the early women teachers who came from China,their aim was to bring about social change through education, in other cases. it seems women were more concerned with personal independence.

By the 1970s,however, women's participation in the workforce had increased substantially, as had the range of white-collarjobs they occupied. In addition, a much larger proportion of women had sufficient educational qualifications to become teachers. As a result, the women who now enter teaching are no longer pioneers in the same sense as their pre-war predecessors. For many of them, teaching may well be just another job, albeit, one with certain desirable features. If these women continue to work after marriage there is, nevertheless , evidence that their attitudes to work and family roles will differ from those of the women who leave the workforce on marriage(A.Wong, 1975:78-90; 1976b:215).

GOVERNMENT POLICY AND CHANGES IN THE STATUS OF TEACHERS

At the beginning of this paper it was noted that a feature of the predominance of women in teaching in other countries has been the generally low status of teaching as indicated by the relatively poorer pay and conditions of service for teachers. In noting this observation its relevance to Singapore was raised as an issue for consideration. As the preceeding description has indicated, the parallels in the Singapore case are limited since, in conjunction with a predominance of women, major efforts have very recently been made to raise the status of teachers by improving their pay and conditions of service.

These efforts have been largely initiated by the government and may seems somewhat paradoxical in view of patterns elsewhere. However, they in fact are far less so when it is realised that they result not from a valuation of teachers'(and hence very much women's)contribution to education but, rather, an assessment of it as unsatisfactory and in need of improvement by making teaching more attractive to the

best type of person. Earlier sections have already indicated how education is assigned an important role in producing the highly skilled workforce considered critical to the realization of the further economic development of Singapore. This workforce, in addition to having certain basic technical skills is, equally importantly, seen as having certain personal characteristics which include 'ruggedness' and the 'moral fibre' which underlies respect for authority and self-discipline. The right type of teacher is clearly a person who is able to inculcate the appropriate knowledge and values into their pupils. It is therefore a highly significant indicator of the government's views on women that the ideal person they seek to attract to teaching is clearly a man.

It is too simple to see the emphasis on the importance of attracting men as merely an indicator of the vitality of the profession because of how it signals the ability of teaching to attract those with a large range of job offers. More important is the insight it provides on the implicit ideas which are held about the characteristics of women and which render them unsuitable for undertaking many necessary tasks. The widespread criticisms of Singapore teachers as lacking professionalism are usually accompanied by specific examples which often relate to a lack of 'commitment', and of social responsibility which may be evidenced by"clock-watching", and unwillingness to take on tasks outside the classroom , or to keep up with recent developments in teaching. Such criticisms are often seen as being most appropriate to married women whose family role is seen as conflicting with their role as teachers. Women in other professions are also apparently seen in a similar way, for in explaining the decision to restrict the proportion of women admitted to medicine to one-third in 1979, mention was made of how they were less willing to undertake the duties required of a newly trained doctor and, also, were more likely to discontinue practising as doctors(Straits Times, 11.3.79).

Another characteristic of women, which is implicitly seen as making them less than satisfactory in promoting the not-so-hidden curriculum underlying Singaporean education, is their lack of 'ruggedness' and the difficulty they thus face in promoting it in their pupils, especially through the various Extra Curricular Activities (a compulsory and assessable part of all schooling) involving certain types of sport and other outdoor activities. The importance placed on 'ruggedness' is well illustrated in the comments made by the then Minister of Education, who had headed the inquiry into the Singapore education system, on the receipt of a report from the committee set up to examine the provisions for Moral Education in the Singaporean Schools. Dr Goh said, "There is a reference in your annex to the need to avoid dangerous games. Literally interpreted, this would mean the discouragement of manly games such as football and rugby. We will not have a rugged and robust society if we discourage children from playing such games" (Singapore, 1979b:iii).[5]

In many cases the beliefs about women's characteristics may have some support. Nevertheless, as a well knowncommentator has pointed out in a more general discussion on the position of women, "The progressive males of the later 40's and through the 50's were able to fight for the political freedom in Singapore, then ruled by the British.....Today, as the Government, they hold enlightened views about almost everything, but strangely enough, when it comes to women, the line is, up to a point, but not further."(Tan, 1972:76) . The conservative views also have a close affinity to the traditional cultural values which members of the government frequently cite as providing the moral and cultural ballast necessary to sustain the society in its mover into new technologies and economic structures (A.Wong, 1976b:216-7). Once the strength of these views is appreciated

it becomes more apparent that the strategy of the government in seeking to improve the status of teachers is also aimed at reducing the 'feminization' of teaching in Singapore.

Footnotes

During the period of time spent in Singapore collecting material used in this paper, the author was a Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

1. Figures for labour force participation and literacy should be treated with caution as they are not strictly comparable for different years because of the different bases for estimation which are available from the census. Estimates for labour force participation for 1921, 1931 and 1947 for women aged 10 and over are based on the formula used by Fong(1975:5-6).

2. Doraisamy(1969:38) cites figures of school enrolments in Singapore prior to 1941 which showsthat of a total of 72,100 pupils, 27,000 were in English schools, 5,800 were in Malay schools, 38,000 were in Chinese schools, 1,000 were in Tamil schools and 300 were in the trade school operated by the government.

3. A brief summary of the changing bilingual provisions is contained in Singapore(1979b:2-2).

4. A survey of the reasons why teachers declined an interview for promotion give some support to these views. Of those who declined 56 per cent were described as married women and 16 per cent as single. Among the reasons given for their refusal to apply was that they considered themselves too junior, they had only recently been promoted, they did not want more responsibility, they were content with being classroom teachers,and,finally, they did not want to upset the equilibrium between their family and official roles. (Straits Times, 10.1.78)

5. Another example of how the government seeks to encourage desirable traits is through its incorporation of 'measures' of them in the criteria for promotions. Often such criteria may involve traits which are not able to be displayed by women. Such an example was a proposal that performance in military reservist training(which women do not compulsoril undergo) should be taken into account in decisions about promotions in civilian jobs such as the public service (Straits Times,25.5.80)

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